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- 1 Ian Tyrrell. *Transnational Nation. United States History in Global Perspective since 1789*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. pp. 289. ISBN 978-1-4039-9368-7.
- 2 When asked to choose among the most influential scholarly studies of history or theory from the last twenty years,ⁱ Russ Castronovo picked Kaplan and Pease's *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (1993) as the book that marks "a paradigmatic shift" in American Studies scholarship because it assesses "the emergence of academic interest in empire, borders, transnationalism, neocolonialism, and war" (427). Although in Ian Tyrrell's *Transnational Nation: United States History in Global Perspective since 1789* we find no single citation on the above mentioned book, it is clear that –considering its vast spatial and temporal scope– this concise but fascinating study attests to the impact and legacy of Kaplan and Pease's intervention. Indeed, as stated in its Introduction, this overview aims to place the United States within the broad movements of world history, emphasizing the cultural, economic, and social porousness of US boundaries from 1789 to of 9/11. By applying a comparative perspective, which stresses the country's profound connectedness to world history, the book offers a refreshing understanding of the forces that have contributed to the shaping of American history and identity, with emphasis placed on America's similarities with and differences from other countries.
- 3 While prior to the "transnational turn" in American Studies scholars placed historical emphasis on the production of the nation along a trajectory determined primarily by domestic forces and debates, Tyrrell proposes a new American history which underlies the nation's transnational connections focusing on its regional (continental and Atlantic centered) as well as on its global relations. Conversely, he delineates four stages within which the nation's transnational encounters developed. Charting first the growth of the newly independent federal republic within the context of the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars and the Anglo-American War of 1812, the author moves on to the Reconstruction, a period that encompasses an expanding continental girth. This phase is marked by settler capitalism, international economics, and migration flows. The second stage, starting in the 1880s and terminating with the Immigration Act of 1924, marks the consolidation of a stronger nation-state and national identity, but also brings about

economic changes through American economic penetration abroad. Next, from 1920 to 1970, comes a growing international involvement of the United States during which American social, political, and cultural influence is attained. The fourth and final stage involves the era of “new” globalization since the 1970s (as globalization already existed from the late eighteenth century) in which the power of the nation-state was compromised by the rise of economic deregulation, free trade, and mass migration but was also consolidated by military power which enabled it to assume independent action through a policy of unilateralism. Thus, after 9/11 the US was in a position to assert a new kind of American quasi-imperial power. Nevertheless, according to Tyrrell, American aggressiveness was not a late twentieth-century phenomenon: since the 1990s we have been witnessing a revival of nineteenth-century traditions of cultural and economic expansion backed by military force.

- 4 Indeed, *Transnational Nation: United States History in Global Perspective since 1789* seeks to explore the historical configurations of forces that affected the United States as much as other parts of the world. The histories of slavery and the slave trade, of migration, of settlement of the Western hemisphere, of industrialization and urbanization, and of the international flows of communication, capital, and commodities are shared –albeit asymmetrically– in a global context. Tyrrell, however, does not underestimate the exceptionalist aspiration of the nation-state under examination, but takes pains to explain how American exceptionalism was constructed, had developed, and was consolidated at the same time as multiculturalism, pluralism, and heterogeneity. Illuminating as this study may be, however, it complies with recent scholarly approaches to American Studies by American as well as non-American Americanists that place the United States within a transnational and comparative perspective.ⁱⁱ And while there is an on-going debate between American Americanists and non-American Americanists as to whether this transnational turn in American Studies is entirely new or has been practiced all along by non-American Americanists,ⁱⁱⁱ the adoption of a transnational perspective, by Tyrrell and others, can only be a useful contribution in American Studies.
- 5 In fact, this elegantly constructed overview of US history must be on every American Studies scholar's shelf alongside companions and other indispensable references. If some discrete topics, such as the international negotiations during the nation-state's early expansionism or the rise of global corporate capitalism proceeding under American auspices, are familiar, the author ties them together in perceptive and comprehensive ways. The endnotes occupy over forty pages of the book, testifying to exhaustive research in printed sources, which the author has supplemented by a list of further reading as well as a brief but coherent index.
- 6 Theodora Tsimpouki, University of Athens

NOTES

- i. *American Literary History* 20.3 (2008): 427-438.

- ii. See Janice Radway, "What's in a Name? Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, November 20, 1998," *American Quarterly* 51.1 (1999) 1-32; David Thelen, "The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History," *The Journal of American History*, 86.3 (1999): 965-76; Shelley Fisher Fishkin, "Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies--Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, November 12, 2004," *American Quarterly* 57.1 (2005) 17-57; Susan Castillo, "Interesting times: A meditation on American Studies in Britain, 2007," *European Journal of American Culture* 27: 1 (2008): 5-14.
- iii. Marc Chenetier, "'New' American Studies; Exceptionalism redux?," *European Journal of American Studies*, EJAS 2008-2, [online], article 8, put online Dec.17, 2008.URL: <http://ejas.revues.org/document7453.html>. Consulted on Feb.23, 2009.